

Having Your Own Headstone

by Jon Beatty Fish

22 MAY 1984

It has come to my attention that in recent times a specific headstone has been reserved with my name on it in the Heber City Cemetery. With tongue planted firmly in cheek, might I say that I am alive and well living in northern California?

I understand that there are some who would think living in California only to be one step up the ladder from outer darkness. However, for those who have had questions about life after death, let me share some of my thoughts. (I will not enclose my exact whereabouts in case the contract on me is still open.)

Let me simply say that the existence of life for me, following the death date on the stone in question, has been nothing short of wonderful; as in — it's a wonderful life! During that period I have married for eternity the girl of my dreams, and we have parented five children. Though some of their actions have been beyond worldly description, as best as I can judge, they have been normal, healthy children. I think, from experience, that I am a fairly good judge of how brain dead teenagers can be at times. Fortunately for all of us — me included — the lights do come back on and we charge off into adulthood with some zeal and zest for life; not death.

For those who say the veil is thin between life and death, you should have been with me and some of my Heber friends on several occasions in 1965! I will not repeat them here so as to enable Mother and Jim to continue living out their mortal existence.

Life was absolutely grand before July of 1965. It has only gotten better since. I am quite certain that I am still amongst the living or those plague shots in boot camp would not have knocked me to my knees. Nor would have the income tax I paid one year.

I am certain that I am still amongst the living even though one of our children was affectionately deemed "the destroying angel."

There are several individuals who might have thoughtlessly scratched deep into the back of the Murdock headstone, my name and the death date of 24 July 1965. I can eliminate several suspects with ease.

The school teacher who said to me in June of 1965, "Someone ought to put you out of your mis-

ery," really didn't meant. She couldn't have. She gave me a C minus in the class.

The youth leader who said that year, "Honestly, sometimes I could just wring your neck," also later apologized.

My nemesis peer, who put his fist and arm through my windshield, only to ride on the hood of my '58 Ford down to the old Heber Hospital, where Dr. Green sewed 27 stitches into him, was not bright enough to spell "July" correctly.

The bishop, who quoted a biblical verse of "death comes unexpectedly!" was not speaking directly to me, but rather giving a stirring sermon to all the ward, in hopes that we would all change our lives.

Now, to those who might still be on the suspect list, I will not name them personally, hoping that that will salve their conscience into letting old wounds heal, but there were a couple of real possibilities.

I dated a USU freshman that summer and her macho ex-boyfriend did not take kindly to a "hick from Heber" winning over her heart. I knew he was angry when he kicked my front tire flat with his cowboy boot. It was also him who said, as he picked my 145 pound frame up, "Let's see if these boys from Heber bounce more than twice."

He might have etched my name at the cemetery.

There was the Heber boy who resented me from the beginning. He was born and raised here. I only moved in during junior high school.

Our chemistry never balanced. I should have recognized that immediately when he tried to blow me up in Glen Carlile's science class on

the top floor of the old high school in 1961. We never were able to resolve our differences after.

He might have etched my name at the cemetery.

There was a girl who comes to mind. She had participated in the Waspette initiations that summer, which I ramrodded. We chose the Heber Cemetery, thinking it an ideal place to scare the girls. She did not think it funny when we ran her into an open grave in the wee hours of the morning. I think she would have forgiven and forgotten

excepting the dirt we shoveled in on top of her.

It might have been her who scratched that death threat into the Murdock headstone.

The other person, who I strongly believe is responsible for this dastardly deed, was the Wasatch High School athlete/teammate kicked off the baseball team in March of 1965

because of his breaking training. He never did forgive the coach for punishing him, and not me. He was never able to work out the anger in his heart that stemmed from the fact

that I had ducked out of sight when the coach drove by Linda's house at midnight, where he simply froze up and stood like the Statue of Liberty. He should have at least hidden those

three rolls of toilet paper stuck on the toilet plunger in his hand, instead of "lifting it upward" like the First Lady of Freedom in New York harbor.

Thinking back on those 24 years, I am certain that some have looked at my crudely etched name and said, "Fools names and fools faces, always appear in public places." It is true that I have been called that — and I have probably even responded to the title — but I hold no ill feelings; even though someone was deadly serious about me having my own headstone early in life.

One family member recently said they would pay to have the deep scratches removed. I discouraged that, believing that this might be my only chance to have a monu-

ment raised to my name in my hometown of Heber.

I wonder if the logical thing to do is to petition the Mayor's Office for an honorary burial plot amongst the Murdock family? They could find themselves in worse company than me.

On second thought, can a feller buy a burial plot in the Heber Cemetery? The headstone is already there. Perhaps the one who wrote the original death date could slip in and make a correction at the eventual time of my demise. I hope that is still a few years off.

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